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Gavin D'Costa: A Response to the essays

I am most grateful to my respondents and to the editor of this conversation.

Let me first turn to two related questions: how we should read the Council texts in relation to previous theological movements and figures; and in the light of subsequent teachings by the magisterium? Professor Marcel Poorthuis and Dr Tim Winter display a remarkable knowledge of the conciliar background. Both look at the Council in the light of the cultural and theological movements of the time. This is important to understand the Council. While I allude to these background issues, the main aim of my book was to use the Council documents, their redaction histories and the debates at the Council as key 'evidence' for what the texts meant. Attention to theological movements of the time are required by scholarship, but one has to be careful about reading into the Council documents the most advanced thinking or new theologies of that period. The Council was not a research forum. Every document was debated and discussed, often by bishops who were not theologians, nor could they be expected to keep up with such varied theological debates. Their experts advised them, but did not have votes. Only the bishops did. They voted as they did for many complex reasons: because of their theological training and insights; often in cultural blocks; because they were sometimes moved by influential speeches and persuasive arguments on the Council floor; other times because they had visited certain cafés and bars where briefings were given by various personalities; or they lived in parts of the world where certain issues were sculpted quite differently from Europe or the United States (which was certainly the case regarding the Jewish people); and sometimes because they were quite simply exhausted and wanted to get home. There were of course lots of other reasons which include scheming politics and complex personalities.¹

I note these complexities because there is a temptation to read the Council through the lens of a great theologian or theological movement in the field. For example, many authors read the Council on the question of other religions as if the documents were part of Karl Rahner's theory of anonymous Christians and anonymous Christianity.² Ironically, Rahner himself was acutely aware that the documents stopped short of his position and pointed out where they remained silent and where he had ventured to speak.³ In contrast to this false transmission, if we examine the debates in the *aula* we find in the discussion of *Ad Gentes* that some missionary bishops were deeply worried about theories like Rahner's as they were seen to undermine mission and the unique nature of the Church.⁴ Another example of this reading into the Council is found in the otherwise excellent study by John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933-1965* (2012).⁵ While Connelly's historical research is meticulous and deeply illuminating, he is in danger of reading the Council through the lens of the theological pioneers that he has studied. For

¹ For a flavour of these complex causalities issues see, for example, the diaries of Yves Congar OP, *My Journal of the Council*, (translated from French by Mary John Ronayne OP & Mary Cecily Boulding OP, English Translation editor: Denis Minns OP, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, Michael Glazier Book, 2012 [1960-66; edition 2002]).

² See for example Peter Phan, 'Reading *Nostra Aetate* in Reverse: A Different Way of Looking at the Relationships Among Religions', *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations*, 10, 2015, 7; Dermot A. Lane, 'Rahner's Christology in Relation to Other Religions', in eds. Padraic Conway & Faince Ryan, *Karl Rahner. Theologian for the Twenty-first Century*, (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2010), 187.

³ See Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol 18, (London: DLT, 1983), 290-91.

⁴ See Suso Brechter, 'Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity', in ed. Herbert Vorgrimler *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Volume IV* (London: Burns & Oates, 1969), 87-182, 122. Brechter cites Rahner's 'Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions' (*Theological Investigations*, 5).

⁵ (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

example he offers conclusions about the meanings of Council texts without attention to the redaction history of the text, the *relatio* accompanying the texts, or the debates that took place over the actual text. This allows him to claim that mission to the Jews was actually rejected by the Council on the basis of Karl Thieme's influence on John Oesterreicher. He confirms this reading by citing actors external to the Council: Rabbi Abraham's Heschel's reading of the final texts and a large number of Jewish 'activists and intellectuals' reading of the New Testament issues.⁶ I will later suggest that there is a very slight tendency to carry out such a hermeneutic in Poorthuis' argument about the significance of 'Abraham' in the Council texts being read through the lens of Massignon. It is worth noting that this problem of hermeneutical 'over-reading' works not only retrospectively, but can also happen by reading Council texts through the lens of later post-Conciliar interpretations by theologians and the media. This issue of reception is signalled by Professor Marianne Moyaert who has contributed much to the area of hermeneutics.

Professor Ruth Langer, the distinguished Jewish scholar from Boston College and much experienced in Catholic-Jewish dialogue, suggests that my lack of attention to later receptions of *Nostra Aetate* leads to a misreading of *Nostra Aetate* and its real significance. Her hermeneutical point is that the Council texts need to be read in the light of their reception. I agree, but would make the claim more cautiously. In my book I was concerned to read the texts afresh precisely because of their very contrary readings after the Council. These differing and even contradictory receptions raise the question: what did the Council texts actually teach? For example, in some Jewish-Christian dialogue circles it has long been taken for granted that Vatican II taught that the Catholic Church teaches that God keeps his promises and is faithful to his covenant and this endorses contemporary Judaism.⁷ Many an article has been built upon this 'given' and later readings of *Nostra Aetate* simply assume this reception to be true. Judaism is a religion of God's valid covenant and thus salvific. My investigation of the Council shows that this is not found in the redaction history or in the debates or in the final texts. My findings do not exclude the view that the Council texts would inevitably lead theologians after the Council to open new doors, explore fresh avenues, and consider new hypotheses. This is precisely one of the functions of a Council. Nor do I wish to suggest that such a conclusion might not be arrived at by a future magisterium. My sole argument was that there had been an over-reading of *Nostra Aetate* in arguing that such a conclusion (endorsing contemporary Judaism as a valid covenant with God) was based on conciliar authority.

In contrast to Langer and in my defence I call upon the Pontifical Council for Religious Relations with the Jews and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Langer cites this document herself: "*The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable*" (Rom 11:29). *A Reflection on Theological Questions Pertaining to Catholic – Jewish Relations on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of "Nostra Aetate" (no.4)* [Henceforth: *Gifts*]. While the document is not a magisterial teaching text by its own admission (preface), it does state (39) that *Nostra Aetate* had been 'not infrequently over-interpreted, and things are read into it which it does not in fact contain.' It then gives an example:

⁶ *From Enemy to Brother*, 154, 254-55.

⁷ See for example, see Philip Cunningham, 'Official Ecclesial Documents to Implement Vatican II on Relations with Jews: Study Them, Become Immersed in Them, and Put Them into Practice,' *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 4, 2009, 1-36, 5; Dermot A. Lane, *Stepping Stones to Other Religions. A Christian Theology of Inter-Religious Dialogue*, (Dublin: Veritas, 2011), 271-76; John Connelly, 'The Catholic Church and mission to the Jews', in editor James L. Heft with John O'Malley, *After Vatican Two. Trajectories and Hermeneutics*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 96 – 133; Mary C. Boys, 'The *Nostra Aetate* Trajectory: Holding our Theological Bow Differently', in editors Marianne Moyaert & Didier Pollefeyt, *Nostra Aetate as Ongoing Challenge for Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, (Michigan/Leuven: Peeters/Eerdmans, 2011), 133-58.

'An important example of over-interpretation would be the following: that the covenant that God made with his people Israel perdures and is never invalidated. Although this statement is true, it cannot be explicitly read into "Nostra aetate" (No. 4). This statement was instead first made with full clarity by Saint Pope John Paul II ... in Mainz on 17 November 1980 ...: "The first dimension of this dialogue, that is, the meeting between the people of God of the Old Covenant, never revoked by God ... and that of the New Covenant, is at the same time a dialogue within our Church, that is to say, between the first and the second part of her Bible" The same conviction is stated also in the Catechism of the Church in 1993: "The Old Covenant has never been revoked" (121).' The authors of *Gifts* would not have chosen this specific example if there was any serious ambiguity about it. Their claim is supported by the exegesis advanced in my book.

The further incisive point made by Langer is interesting: if my exegesis is right, that the Council did not intend to pronounce on contemporary Judaism, then 'the Council's statements about Jews refer only to a people at best frozen in time and at worst long dead'. But her conclusion could tell us that the actual concern of the Council was not to establish how Jewish people in their post-Temple history kept or did not keep their covenant fidelity. That was a question that could not have been addressed without clarifying other unresolved questions. None of the speeches in the *aula* raised Langer's issue. The primary concern at the Council was to refute the charge that the Jews were guilty of killing God/Christ and to overturn the anti-Semitic traditions that followed from this deicidal charge. The secondary concern was rehabilitating St Paul's reflections on Romans 9-11, parts of which were cited verbatim in *Lumen Gentium* 16. Once these concerns were addressed, the doors were open to move to contemporary Judaism as Saint Pope John Paul II did. I've already cited *Gifts* on this matter, which refutes, along with the arguments presented in my book, Poorthuis claim that this is the second cornerstone of the Council: that 'God's promises to Israel [meaning contemporary Judaism] have not been revoked.' His interpretation of this phrase moves into assuming, contra to *Gifts* and my book, that these promises 'with his people Israel perdures and is never invalidated.' Please note, I'm not denying this is true, but am denying that the Council taught this as an object of truth.

This matter is important both for understanding the development of doctrine and a proper grasp of magisterial teaching. Regarding the covenantal status of contemporary Judaism, what we might call a development of doctrine after the Council, there is a distinct and important difference in claiming (a) that the covenant to Israel perdures and is valid and (b) the possible connected statements that may or may not follow from it: and thus all 'Jews' today are faithful to 'this covenant' made by God. I'm trying to disentangle the layers that are involved in arriving at (b). Hence, it is possible to imagine: that God remains faithful to Her promises without logically entailing that the people to whom these promises are made (Jews or and Christians or and Jewish Christians) are faithful to those promises. The move from (a) to (b) requires all sorts of complex conditions, some of which are dependent on the way the first claim is construed and some of which are dependent on further claims that need to be made and defended. For example, God's promises could be conditional on fidelity by his people or unconditional upon such fidelity. Furthermore, neither option guarantees the fidelity of the people but only relate to God's fidelity. One has a series of complex questions to answer before we can arrive at any intelligible claim that all Jews today are in a valid covenant with God. How, for example, is one to determine what precisely is signified by Jewish fidelity to the 'covenant'? This raises the question: which Jews; which covenant? Does the covenant entail keeping all the laws of the Pentateuch as some 'ultra-Orthodox' Jews understand it; or does it entail keeping only certain laws that human discrimination sees fit to keep, while arguing that other laws are time bound and cultural, as is argued by some 'liberal' Jews? And what of the laws related to ritual and the state: what of those Jews who argue that the current state of Israel is part of God's covenantal

gift to his people? Is the Catholic Church underwriting the latter when it says the Jewish covenant is valid? If not, then does the Catholic Church become the arbiter of God's promises to the Jewish people rather than the Jewish people arbitrating this matter? This latter question also relates to Langer's concerns to have an autonomous self-defining Jewish voice and for that voice to be heard in Catholic thinking. I think she is utterly right. I for one have learnt from her Jewish voice. But, with due respect to Langer, Jewish voices cannot *determine* the outcome of intra-Catholic reasoning. It must inform and question, but surely not determine dogmatic theology. (I'm not sure Langer is pushing for such a strong role).

Besides the question of reading magisterial statements accurately and contextually, there is also a theological aspect to the question. The pulsing heart of these complexities comes to light when *Gifts* no. 35 recognises the deep aporia that opens up when Catholics balance the Pauline vision of the validity of the Jewish covenant while at the same time claiming that the 'Christian faith confesses that God wants to lead all people to salvation, that Jesus Christ is the universal mediator of salvation, and that there is no "other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved" (Acts 4:12).' Catholic theologians must struggle with this tension: 'That the Jews are participants in God's salvation is theologically unquestionable, but how that can be possible without confessing Christ explicitly, is and remains an unfathomable divine mystery.' (36) For Jews, as Langer signals, this resolution may be far from acceptable and may even hinder dialogue. For Catholics, the questions have only begun to be asked with attention to the pain and suffering caused to Jews by Catholic teachings. If Langer finds this kind of Catholic conversation partner closes dialogue down – with this exclusive claim about Christ – then hopefully there might be a chance to have a further conversation about what constitutes authentic and genuine dialogue and what closes down dialogue. I hope my position does not close dialogue down. It is designed to open it up while being faithful to truth as understood by Catholics. I would not suggest that Langer drop any of her truth claims to continue in dialogue with Catholics. What would be the purpose of dialogue if we did not meet the Other in their complex and messy reality?

I turn to one analogous matter of interpretation but now related to Catholics and Muslims. Poorthuis claims that Abraham is 'father' of Jews, Christians and Muslims and he claims that I have played this down: 'Abraham's position in *Nostra Aetate* is without precedent in Church history from the second century onward.' D'Costa, Poorthuis argues, claims continuity in the teaching of the Council but this is clearly discontinuous with Christian history and thought. There are two forms of the argument advanced in Poorthuis' paper: one requires only that Abraham is 'father' of Jews and Christians; the other requires that Abraham is 'father' of Jews, Christians and Muslims. Let me take the Muslim issue first.

That Poorthuis moves easily from one to the other and that he interprets these claims as sustained by the Council documents is, I think, a result of his over-reading through Massignon-type spectacles. I agree with Poorthuis that Massignon was no postmodern (or modernist) relativist. I agree that Massignon is an important influence upon the Council. However, I offered detailed arguments for why Massignon should not be seen as determinative for understanding the thrust of the documents regarding Islam's status. Regarding Abraham in particular, note that the first draft of *Lumen Gentium* 16 on the Muslims was transformed into a very different second and eventual third draft. The difference between the first and second is significant. The first draft: 'The sons of Ishmael, who recognize Abraham as their father and believe in the God of Abraham, are not unconnected with the revelation made to the patriarchs.' The second draft: 'But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place among these are the Muslims, who professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God (who has spoken through

the prophets), and on the last day will judge humankind.’ The drafting Committee received 230 objections to the first draft sentence.⁸ The claim that Islam derives from Ishmael was a claim dear to Massignon. Some of the objections deemed valid by the drafting Committee were that this claim about Ishmael was not verified historically and that the theological implications were not properly discussed or established. Making this claim might imply that Islam derives genealogically from Abraham and contained a legitimate covenantal lineage given by God. Massignon was willing to walk that path. The Council Fathers were not. Their implicit question was: could God have given a covenant that contradicted the covenant given in Christ?

In the light of all these objections this part of the sentence was deleted. The word ‘revelation’ was also deleted from the next part of the sentence as some Fathers felt it would signify to Muslims that the truth of the Qur’an was being acknowledged. This would mislead both Muslims and Catholics. In fact, the more common assumption at that time that would have been shared by the Fathers is that the Qur’an was dependant on Jewish and Christian scriptures that were circulating in some form or other in Mecca and Medina, probably through extant Jewish and Christian communities. Furthermore, the sentence was also changed to make it clear that they (Muslims) view their faith to have a connection with Abraham. This change walked the fine line between straight forwardly rejecting this claim or fully accepting it. Poorthuis seems to think that it was accepted. I argue that it was not. After the Council this ‘Abrahamic’ link between the three religions became theologically popular. However, in more recent scholarship, the jury is out. Some contemporary scholars are very hostile to the idea of a common Abrahamic covenant.⁹ Poorthuis reads the Council through Massignon-lenses and thus, I suggest, puts more emphasis on the Abrahamic connection between Jews, Christians and Muslims than was present at the Council. This is a very subtle and nuanced over-reading but nevertheless, an over-reading.

This does not take away from Poorthuis’ other point: that viewing the role of Abraham as father of both Jews and Christians is discontinuous in Christian theological traditions. Is this a problem for my argument? I think not. In my book I employ continuity and discontinuity purely to formal magisterial conciliar teachings or teachings by the formal papal magisterium in its ordinary or extraordinary exercise (2, 6). I was not addressing theological traditions, liturgy, or any other genre. *Gifts* no. 17 is quite frank that its own claims that replacement and supersessionist theologies are wrong imply that the majority of early fathers and medieval theologians were wrong in their claims about Judaism. This is an important admission but an admission about theological traditions, not about magisterial authoritative teachings.

What if a valid Council in 1442 solemnly and bindingly teaches X, and a valid Council in 1965 solemnly and bindingly teaches ‘not X’, directly contradicting the earlier Council? Authoritative doctrinal discontinuity has been identified. This claim is indeed made by some scholars regarding the contradiction between the Council of Florence on the Jews and Vatican II.¹⁰ The implications of such discontinuity might mean: that an inauthentic formal teaching magisterium presided over the Council in either 1442 or 1965 (the position of the Society of Pope Pius X); that one should admit that the church errs in matters when solemnly teaching the faith (the implications of O’Collins’ position); or that ‘X’ in 1442 is not commensurate with ‘X’ in 1965 (my argument). This is admittedly a restrictive and formal set of conditions to judge continuity and discontinuity, but it is the sole

⁸ See in more detail my discussion: 169-75.

⁹ See for example, Jon D. Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham, The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

¹⁰ Gerald O’Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 204.

context of my investigation. Hence, I am in agreement with Poorthuis that the emphasis on Abraham construed as father of both Jews and Christians is discontinuous with theological traditions within the Church. But that is not the form of doctrinal discontinuity that I focus on. If Poorthuis were to argue that it is discontinuous with previous formal magisterial pronouncements that would undermine my argument. However, in my research the only formal use of the term Jews/ *Iudeos* in formal doctrinal statements occurs at the Council of Florence. Moyaert covers this argument in my book in her thoughtful and accurate summary so I will not repeat it here.

I now turn to a different question raised by Langer and Moyaert: mission to the Jewish people. Langer raises the painful and complex issue of Christian mission to the Jews and is critical of any Catholic mission to the Jewish people. Moyaert notes that mission to the Jews has been repudiated in *Gifts* which raises the question about reception most acutely. Langer's claims raises the question whether mission to the Jewish people is compatible with dialogue with the Jews people? Some Jews such as Langer understand mission, however non-coercive, as 'triumphalist' to the core, 'not respecting Judaism's right to exist or God's covenant with the Jews'.

Langer seems to accept my point in the book that there are possible pragmatic grounds for halting mission, but no clear resolved and widely accepted theological grounds. My argument was that if Jews see Christian mission as an invitation to self-extinction, which has tragic and painful historical precedence, there are pragmatic grounds for halting mission. I acknowledge significant theological grounds that are advanced from Romans 11.25-26. That text was also mentioned in the *aula* debates and this eschatological 'coming in' has been recently deployed by some significant cardinals such as Joseph Ratzinger, Walter Kasper, and Kurt Koch. There is a strong momentum in certain Catholic circles adopting this reading but among New Testament scholars there is no widely accepted reading of Romans. 25-26.

However, Langer makes it clear, that even if Christian discipleship theologically required mission to all peoples, thus including the Jewish people, a second objection comes into play. Mission is 'triumphalist' to the core, 'not respecting Judaism's right to exist or God's covenant with the Jews'. I cannot agree with three elements of this claim. First, the word 'triumphalist' is surely rhetorical. Isn't any position that affirms truth 'triumphalist'? Are those who oppose anti-Semitism triumphalist because they have a passionate belief that discrimination on grounds of religion is unacceptable? For certain truth claims we must be willing to 'impose' on others by supporting legislation that outlaws practical acts against that truth. In this case: outlawing anti-Semitism. If triumphalist, then that is a good thing.

The more significant point seems to be that mission presupposes that Judaism does not have a right to exist and that it denies God's covenant with the Jews. If these two latter propositions are always and necessarily entailed by the teaching that mission to the Jews is theologically justified, Langer is right to complain. However, I think they are only contingently, not necessarily, related to the mission teaching. The first proposition regarding Judaism's right to exist has thankfully finally begun to be dismantled within Christian theology. It has been present and disastrous for Jews for far too long. Vatican II is the beginning of its clear demolition, both in *Nostra Aetate* and *Dignitatis Humanae*. In the latter it teaches every religion, within limits, has social and political rights to be practiced freely (*Dignitatis*). On the second proposition, regarding God's covenant with the Jewish people now, *Gifts* unconditionally rejects 'supersessionist' and 'replacement' theologies (its terms). There, Judaism has not forfeited its rights to legitimate *theological* existence after the time of Christ. But even if it is upheld that Jews do have a legitimate covenant with God, as *Gifts* teaches, there is the unnegotiable claim that Christ is the cause of all salvation made in *Gifts*, even if he is not known explicitly in Judaism. This opens the way for holding the compatibility of Catholic mission to the Jews with the

validity of the Jewish covenant remaining intact. But, as Moyaert points out, *Gifts* seems to have repudiated mission thus undermining the direction of my arguments. But does it? A closer reading suggests something more complex and unresolved.

In *Gifts* for the first time the Catholic Church has taken seriously the church of the circumcised that coexist with the church of the gentiles. As *Gifts* 15 puts it: there is an '*ecclesia ex circumcisione* and the *ecclesia ex gentibus*, one Church originating from Judaism, the other from the Gentiles.' This reality, even if very slender in contemporary Catholicism, mainly consists of small communities of Jews or individual Jews who have become Catholics and wish to continue being 'Jewish', precisely because God has not been unfaithful to Her covenant with her people. The Catholic Church, with its developing teachings, is now able to see that such a minority community is not only legitimate but even specially blessed. Previously, those who have continued Jewish practices after becoming Catholic, and those in the form of the Coptic Christians who practiced circumcision (which may well be more a cultural rather than a religious practice in their case), have both been condemned. The dominant theological traditions, for example found in Thomas Aquinas, view Jewish ritual liturgical practices as both dead and deadening.¹¹ But *Gifts* brings these communities back into view in a deeply positive light. In doing so it raises a new vista in relation to the question of mission to the Jewish people. One might suggest that that this community of Hebrew Catholics, the *ecclesia ex circumcisione*, are uniquely placed to address Langer's deep and heart felt concern: if Jews convert they are being invited to self-extinction. In contrast, such Hebrew Catholic communities would witness to the reality that self-extinction is not the prerequisite required for following Christ. They witness the reality that the ancient and first covenant is still valid and gains a new dynamic within Christ. At the same time Hebrew Catholic communities affirm the second covenant, worshipping Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of the first, does not lead to replacement or supersession. This line is unlikely to be popular with many Jewish groups. In fact in Israel such Jews alone have been singled out: losing their legal Jewish identity claims and denied the right to return.¹² Thankfully, in Langer's market place, such 'dual belonging' will surely be welcome as yet another option.

What of Moyaert's observation about *Gifts*: it takes a contrary position to mine. This relates both to reception and the issue of mission. Here I would make four points in response. First, *Gifts* is not an authentic teaching document of the magisterium, made clear in its opening paragraphs. This simply means one can disagree with its teachings and contest them for good theological reasons and that is part of what *Gifts* invites. Second, given its origins from two curial offices (the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Council for Religious Relations with the Jews) it does indicate the direction in which official Catholic teaching is moving. It needs respectful and thoughtful reception. Third, the reception of documents tell us how they are received and form part of that document's history, but not all receptions are valid and their relationship to earlier documents must be scrutinized carefully. If *Gifts* takes a contrary position to my own, I would have to examine it carefully for its relation to the Council and its use or non-use of the Council in the particular instances of controversy. Fourth, *Gifts* actually gives no developed rationale for its position and also introduces a problematic distinction regarding mission. This is not to criticise it, but to note that it

¹¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a-IIae q. 90 – 108. There are many studies of Aquinas on this issue. See especially the internal Catholic debate between Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple. Salvation According to Thomas Aquinas*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002) and Matthew A. Tapie, *Aquinas on Israel and the Church. The Question of Supersessionism in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014).

¹² See Nechma Tec, *In the Lion's Den. The Life of Oswald Rufeisen*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), especially 210-20.

opens new doors for further exploration before its position can gain traction. *Gift* 40 says: 'It is easy to understand that the so-called 'mission to the Jews' is a very delicate and sensitive matter for Jews because, in their eyes, it involves the very existence of the Jewish people. ... The Church is therefore obliged to view evangelisation to Jews, who believe in the one God, in a different manner from that to people of other religions and world views. In concrete terms this means that the Catholic Church neither conducts nor supports any specific institutional mission work directed towards Jews. While there is a principled rejection of an institutional Jewish mission, Christians are nonetheless called to bear witness to their faith in Jesus Christ also to Jews, although they should do so in a humble and sensitive manner, acknowledging that Jews are bearers of God's Word, and particularly in view of the great tragedy of the Shoah.'

The first line is profoundly true: many, though not all, Jews view Christian mission as an invitation to self-extinction. It is not 'good news'. Langer is unambiguously clear on this point. I think this is the only rationale given and it is human, pragmatic, and historical – but not theological or dogmatically normative. The second cited line raises the issue whether Islam, acknowledged by *Lumen Gentium* (LG) 16 to 'along with us adore the one and merciful God', also thus requires a different manner of evangelization or even none at all. The third line is puzzling. It does not follow from the second. Furthermore, it actually seems to be contrary to Vatican II. At the Council, LG 14 -16, indicates that other than separated Christians who confess Christ and are trinitarian, the Church's mission is towards *all* those who do not know Christ. LG 16 acknowledges different types within this group: those who know God (Jews and Muslims, of which the Jews are first), those who believe in a transcendent power and those who are not 'religious'.¹³ Is the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* wrong? Obviously, for the authors of *Gift* the answer would be no, but there is no explicit attention given to LG's teachings in *Gifts*. Furthermore, one might also ask to what other religion is there a 'specific institutional mission' in contrast to the disavowal made in *Gifts*? The Congrégation de Notre-Dame de Sion Sisters of Zion was devoted to the conversion of the Jewish people and sanctioned by the Church (in the late 19th century). Hence, the Catholic Church did practice an institutional mission towards the Jews. Admittedly, after the Second World War the Congrégation now practice, through an inversion of their founders' aims, the opposite. But there are no religious orders that were founded to convert Buddhists and Hindus and there are no specific institutional missions towards Buddhists and Hindus. Does this mean that mission is not appropriate to these religious groups?

The fourth line of *Gifts* seriously adds further to the difficulties. Personal sensitive and thoughtful witness is enjoined which drives a serious distinction between personal and institutional mission within the Church. Witness and mission are related two paragraphs later: 'Christian mission and witness, in personal life and in proclamation, belong together' (42). *Gift* seems to propound a position that holds that no institutional mission by the Catholic Church to the Jewish people is legitimate; but only individual personal mission. This is a curious distinction in Catholic theology as the Church is understood to be the person of Christ first and foremost, and only secondly to be the people who constitute the unity of the Body of Christ, who partake in the ministry of Christ. Its institutional character is thus integrated into its personal sacramental character. Is this individualism compatible with the ecclesial personal sacramental theology so important to the Council? Is *Gifts* muddled? I think not. The reason for this judgment is the reading above whereby *Gifts* may be seen to be prophetic in presenting an inchoate and visionary recognition that the gentile church cannot partake in mission to the Jews as this would signal the erasure of Jewish identity. Only a Jewish *ecclesia ex circumcisione*, which does not yet properly exist in the Catholic Church, could sensitively

¹³ See D'Costa, *Vatican II*, 122-30.

carry out an institutional mission that is not 'bad news' for the Jewish people. This reading saves *Gifts* from internal incoherence, but we will have to see the reception of *Gifts* to work out how this matter is resolved.

Moyaert raises two other important questions. I do not attend to marginalized voices (feminist, liberation, post-modern theologians). Moyaert also notes the reason why: that I'm focused on doctrinal interpretations of the key texts and these groups do not offer them on our subject matter. I do register postmodern views of 'doctrine' (24-36), but I found in my research that there was a paucity of engagement with the interpretation of *LG* and *NA* in these groups. However, Moyaert is right to criticise my marginalising such groups for my book does contain many assumptions about the nature of 'doctrine' and 'truth' that are contested by these very groups. My project's 'Catholic' plausibility would require me to address these challenges. It would require a substantive discussion of metaphysics, historicity and power and the way these three groups have viewed these categories alongside attention to say recent Thomist construals of these categories. I would have to narrate the genealogies of these competing visions in an Alasdair MacIntyre like fashion to examine possibly deep incommensurabilities and possible agreements (both of which exist).

Second, Moyaert suggests I operate with a 'narrow view' of doctrine. I agree with her but I would prefer the word 'specific' rather than 'narrow' as narrow tends to indicate something negative. We all hope that people take a 'broad view' of a matter rather than a 'narrow' one. So I agree with Moyaert that there are many doctrines that are never formally promulgated, many remain implicit and that liturgy is seen as a doctrinal source. However, because I chose to focus on a single question: formally explicitly taught doctrines by magisterial conciliar teachings or teachings by the formal papal magisterium in its ordinary or extraordinary exercise; it would be difficult to attend to the bigger picture that Moyaert rightly draws. But that wider picture does not actually undermine the specific picture that I focus on, unless one is just not interested in that arena of formal doctrinal teaching. There is a serious question to be answered about anti-Semitic liturgies, but liturgies are not formally promulgated doctrines by a Council or the magisterium. It is also perhaps an irony that some of the Eastern churches rebelled at the proposals in *Nostra Aetate* on the grounds that it overturned what had been taught in the liturgy of the church. John XXIII was the first to make changes in the liturgy to make the truth of doctrine clearer and not the other way round. The interaction between liturgy and doctrine is complex.

To turn to a different matter. Poorthuis' second objection to my book is in two parts: (i) that Judaism (and Islam) are not subsumed under a 'ray of truth' which is a term used of gentile religions; (ii) that Judaism (and Islam) are not referred to as 'invincibly ignorant' and cannot be viewed as *praeparatio evangelicae*. Regarding (i), I am to blame for this reading of my work. I treated the notion of a 'rays of truth' in chapter 2 as a generic approach to non-Christian religions and then said that if the reader only reads chapter 2 and not 3 and 4, on Jews and Muslims respectively, they would 'fail to see the remarkably positive new ground charted by the Council in relation to Jews and Muslims.' (112) At this point, I also made the claim there that *praeparatio* and invincible ignorance are applicable to all the religions treated at the Council. This relates to Poorthuis' point (ii). But I did not explicitly claim that 'rays of truth' applies as an explanation of Jews and Muslims. Thus, I entirely agree that the description of Jews and Muslims is not to be contained within the category 'rays of truth' for there are objective elements in these two religions clearly singled out in *Lumen Gentium* and *Nostra Aetate* that indicate they are different from other religions. So much for (i) and I'm grateful to Poorthuis for picking this up.

Regarding (ii), I would contest Poorthuis' interpretation. My argument was that *Lumen Gentium* 16 does differentiate between the *diversis rationibus*, 'different ways', in which the religions are related

to the one true religion - Catholic Christianity (*Lumen Gentium* 14). *Lumen Gentium* 14 starts with the true Church, 15 indicates the next circle of relationship, with trinitarian Christians, who are joined to Christ (*Christo conjunguntur*) but are not 'objects' of mission because of their baptismal entry into 'churches or ecclesiastical communities'. *Lumen Gentium* 16 indicates those who have 'not yet' (*nondum acceperunt*) accepted the gospel. This is precisely why *Lumen Gentium* 17 is focused entirely on the necessity of mission to all those who do not know the gospel: the Father, Son and Spirit. In 16, the religions and non-religion's relationship is one of being 'related' (*ordinantur*) and the note to this opening sentence of 16 refers to Aquinas' *Summa*. I discuss this footnote in detail (89-99). The conclusion of that discussion was that 'the positive elements within the religions orient (*ordinantur*) all men and women towards the Gospel. All these non-Christian religions, theist or otherwise, belong to the 'People of God' in potentiality, for God desires the salvation of all and Christ is the head of all men and women. ... This potentiality is actualised on earth through supernatural faith in Christ and baptism. How it is actualised after death is another matter.' (99)

Hence, the religions are importantly differentiated in terms of the objective elements that orient their followers towards Catholic Christianity. This is what LG 16 establishes. It would be strange to propose that the followers of these religions are not invincibly ignorant of Christianity. Such a proposal would surely imply one of two unacceptable alternatives. They genuinely know the truth of Christianity in their minds and heart and have nevertheless rejected it – a situation that is said in *Lumen Gentium* 14 to lead to exclusion from salvation. This could not be right. Alternatively, they genuinely know the truth of Christianity in their minds and heart and nevertheless remain in good faith in their own religion, which would mean that their religions are equal paths to salvation to Christ and his Church. That position is also inadmissible.¹⁴ This leaves us with the only option that makes sense of the argument presented in *Lumen Gentium* 14 – 17, that these religions and non-religions can be viewed positively when their followers, those who are invincibly ignorant of the truth of the gospel, in various ways seek and have found the true God, explicitly in the case with Jews and Muslims. That they are invincibly ignorant of Christ and the trinity is not incompatible with their being gripped by the truth of the revelation of God as one, creator, sustainer and judge. It is not incompatible with the post-conciliar idea that Judaism enjoys a valid covenant with God.

One of the key drafters of LG, 14-17, Yves Congar, writes of LG 16: 'where non-Christians are concerned, the Council speaks of an ordering or relation to the People of God ... Among all of them there exists at least this objective bond consisting in the fact that they are called to salvation, that they belong to a saved humanity whose existential situation is modified by this very fact. ... This absolute universalism of God's plan to gather men into a People of sons who, as the *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity* (art. 7) states, can say "Our Father" as with one voice, gives rise to the correlative vocation of the People of God, in the explicit and formal sense, that is, the Church, to radiate and to extend itself to the ends of the earth.' [He then immediately elaborates on the Church's vocation to mission outlining *Ad gentes* and 'ends of the earth'] 'To this list should be added what formally pertains to the missions at the end of article 16 and in all of article 17.'¹⁵ Congar clearly saw that all religions and non-religions mentioned in LG 16 as subject to mission in principle.

In the light of this conclusion, the term *praeparatio evangelica* is apposite and indeed extended beyond Judaism to other religions. This is one of the interesting novelties that Joseph Carola has

¹⁴ See *Dominus Iesus*, 2000, 12; and *Gifts*, 35.

¹⁵ Congar, 'People', 204-05.

traced.¹⁶ Textual evidence of this is found in *Lumen Gentium* 2, 9, 16, 17 and *Ad Gentes* 3, 9 and implicitly *Nostra Aetate* 2.¹⁷ Langer suggests that *Lumen Gentium* 9 may reflect supersessionist views that remain alongside more advanced views developed in other parts of the Conciliar texts. Langer may be right in so much as these texts were composed without a synthetic overview and each related to particular debates in a context. However, I would suggest that a fulfilment reading of the texts overcomes the tension, while not denying that the issue of supersessionism was far from resolved at the Council. David Rosen, like Langer, also replicates this either/or binary: either Christianity supersedes Judaism or must grant equal theological status.¹⁸ There are more than these two options on offer. The Council deals with 'fulfilment', and argues at an admittedly abstract level, that nothing that is true, good and holy is erased but instead purified and raised up through its meeting and becoming one with Christ. Fulfilment fails to explicitly and clearly distinguish itself from supersessionism and replacement. *Gifts* has now helpfully clarified that distinction. *Gifts* use of the term 'fulfilment' is clearly differentiated and opposed to supersessionism and replacement in every instance it is used (14, 22, 23, 23, 27, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36).

Dr Wouter Biesbrouck's essay is ecumenically generous and thoughtfully challenging. His comment about Muslim converts to Christianity seeing that the God of Islam is in continuity with the God they come to worship as trinitarian is worthy of serious further research. It is a good example of the complexity of the debate: do Muslims and Christians worship the same God? Presumably such Muslim converted not on the basis of finding the 'same God', but they also uphold that the Christian God is a deepening of the Muslim view. I also found Biesbrouck's depiction of the *prisca theologia* fascinating and important. In another work I have employed it.¹⁹ I cannot in this context reflect further, except to agree that this ecumenical exchange is very important and that historically, the *prisca theologia* is also to be found within the Catholic theological tradition.

Biesbrouck is right to note the dissonance with my other published work on this 'same God' question. In an earlier publication, I argued 'yes, but', compared to the different emphasis in this present book. In this book I did not seek to advance my own theology of religions but establish what the Council was teaching. It taught a 'yes', Christians and Muslims do worship the same God. It did not add an explicit 'but', probably because of Pope John XXIII's concern not to be negative about people and cultures in this Council, but to work positively with what Catholics might find in common. A 'but' would also be in danger of undermining the 'yes' which the Fathers wished to communicate. However, I would argue that the 'but' is there, but implicitly: in the documents' refusal to mention the Qur'an, Muhammad, the five pillars, and Muslim views on marriage and divorce. Many Muslims were deeply saddened by the omission of the first two in particular. But in each of these particular areas, the dissonance between Catholics and Muslims was, as I show in my book, registered clearly in the debates and therefore implicitly in the final text. Most importantly, the Christological and trinitarian difference, the most important 'but', was explicitly mentioned in *Nostra Aetate* 3: 'They venerate Jesus as a prophet, even though they do not acknowledge him as God'. In conclusion I think

¹⁶ Joseph Carola, 'Appendix: Vatican II's Use of Patristic Themes Regarding Non-Christians', *Catholic Engagement with World Religions A Comprehensive Study*, ed. Karl J. Becher and Ilaria Morali (New York: Orbis, 2010), 143-153.

¹⁷ See my book: 99-107.

¹⁸ David Rosen, 'Jewish and Israeli Perspectives 40 Years after Vatican II', in eds., Lamdan & Melloni, *Nostra Aetate*, 175-88, 176-77. He falsely contrasts: either supersessionism or mutual esteem? Mutual esteem is compatible with fulfilment. Rosen, is otherwise a nuanced commentator on Vatican documents.

¹⁹ *Christianity and World Religions. Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 92, 107.

the Council did register a 'but', but more subtly and with due regard to Muslim sensibilities. In my own writing, as a constructive systematic scholar, I could be more clear and explicit about the 'but'.

This point also pertains to Biesbrouck raising the question whether in my discussion I conflate the question of revelation with the question of reference? The question is indicative of a real question about Islam's status that has not received due attention. The Qur'an does portray truths of supernatural revelation (Mary's virginity and Jesus being the Jewish 'messiah'), but it also contextualizes these so that it hinders the full truth of revelation (Mary gives birth to 'God' - why she is called *Theotokos* and that Jesus is redeemer of the world and divine and human in this particular role as messiah, transforming Jewish views). Hence, the 'same God' question is both a question of reference (does the term 'God' refer to the same 'entity'?) as well as a question of revelation (the 'reference' of the term is dictated by the narrative in the Qur'an and in the Gospel – only the latter of which Christians count as revelation, yet the former employs some of the traditions deriving from the gospel). I do not wish to conflate them, but neither can the issue be addressed without both questions being attended to at the same time. This is another task for the post-conciliar church.

I again register my sincere thanks to the contributors and the editor and hope that at least some of their critical questions raised have been taken seriously in my response. There is no last word on these matters.